The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (continued)

Thematic cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions (A/72/7/Add.13 and A/72/371/Add.3)

United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (A/72/7/Add.17 and A/72/371/Add.7)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2018 under thematic cluster III (A/72/371/Add.3), said that the report contained the proposed budgets for seven of the nine special political missions grouped under cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions. The proposed resources for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia would be presented in separate addenda. In 2017, cluster III missions had contributed to conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security through early warning, mediation, preventive diplomacy, support to electoral processes, good offices and peacebuilding.

2. The proposed resources for 2018 amounted to $151.4 million, representing an increase of $3.6 million compared with the approved resources for 2017, a difference mainly attributable to a lower vacancy rate and higher steps in grade for civilian, military and police personnel, primarily in the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The increase was partially offset by lower operational costs, mainly for medical services and ground transportation.

3. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2018 for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (A/72/371/Add.7), she said that the Security Council by its resolution 2366 (2017) had established the Mission for an initial period of 12 months, and by its resolution 2377 (2017) had approved the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/745) regarding the Mission's size, operational aspects and mandate. The Mission was mandated to verify the implementation of two key aspects of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP). Those aspects were the political, economic and social reintegration of FARC-EP members and the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures. The proposed resource requirements for the Mission for 2018 amounted to $73.6 million, with a total staffing complement of 393 civilian positions.

4. **Mr. Sene** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the resources proposed for seven missions under thematic cluster III (A/72/7/Add.13), said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed staffing resources for those missions. It also recommended that further requirement for the position of Senior Political/Electoral Officer (P-5) in the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) should be fully justified in the proposed programme budget for 2019. The Advisory Committee reiterated that, as a matter of overall policy, the continuing requirement for positions that had been vacant for two years or longer should be reviewed and either justification should be provided for their retention or they should be proposed for abolishment. It therefore recommended the abolishment of three positions in UNSOM. The six Human Rights Officer positions proposed for UNSOM in order to expand the human rights due diligence policy work would benefit a number of United Nations entities; greater information was needed regarding cost sharing arrangements for the services provided to other entities.

5. With respect to operational costs, the Advisory Committee was concerned that the resource estimates for 2018 might not be realistic in view of the current state of underexpenditure and recommended that information on actual and projected expenditure to the end of 2017 should be provided to the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee also recommended reductions under facilities and infrastructure in the amounts of $84,700 and $110,000 for UNOWAS and UNSOM, respectively. Given the need for a review of the use of shared assets for air operations, the Advisory Committee also recommended that the resources for 2018 under air operations for UNOWAS and UNIOGBIS should be maintained at the levels approved for 2017.

6. The Advisory Committee recommended reductions of $25,800 for consultants in the United

Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), given that the mission should use in-house capacity to perform core activities or long-term functions. The Advisory Committee also recommended against the proposed resources of $109,100 for individual contractors to perform support activities in UNOCA and noted that increases in substantive staffing should not automatically result in increased support activities. Lastly, greater information should be provided on mine action activities in future budget proposals for UNSOM.

7. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed requirements for 2018 for the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (A/72/7/Add.17), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed staffing resources for the Mission, other than one position of Administrative Assistant (Local level) in the Office of the Chief of Staff and one backstopping position of Human Resources Officer (P-4) in the Department of Field Support. The Advisory Committee noted that the ratio of international to national staff was 1:1 in the Mission and welcomed the reliance on national staff. With respect to operational costs, in the absence of sufficient justification and information on the consultancy requirements, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction in the amount of $295,900. In its main report on special political missions (A/72/7/Add.10), the Advisory Committee had made comments and recommendations on official travel and the Kuwait Joint Support Office.

8. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the Community welcomed the successful implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. The Community had contributed to that Mission through unarmed observers who had verified the implementation of the ceasefire and the laying down of arms, thereby demonstrating the importance of regional mechanisms for conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy, good offices and mediation.

9. CELAC strongly supported the peace process; the efforts and compromises that had been made in that process were a testament to the commitment to consolidating peace in Colombia. The United Nations must therefore give the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia its full support in order to successfully reintegrate FARC-EP members into political, economic and social life and implement security guarantees. He was confident that the Committee would ensure that the Mission received the resources required to implement its mandate fully and effectively.

10. **Mr. Hyndrak** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the Republic of Moldova, said that excellent progress had been made in Colombia since the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. The States members of the European Union were strongly committed to the peace process, including through their support for the mandate and functioning of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which would play a crucial role in verifying the implementation of the political, economic and social reintegration of FARC-EP members and security guarantees. At the current critical stage, the Mission should receive the support of the entire international community, including through the United Nations commitment and presence on the ground. The European Union was supporting peacebuilding in Colombia, one of its closest partners in Latin America, with a package of nearly 600 million euros, through the European Union Trust Fund in Colombia and potential loans from the European Investment Bank.

11. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea** (Mexico) said that the achievement of peace in Colombia with the end of its civil conflict demonstrated that the international community was capable of finding solutions even to long-standing problems. The Organization had played an important role through the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which had included unarmed observers from Mexico. At the current stage, the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia would play a crucial role in facilitating the reintegration of former combatants and should therefore be deployed widely in the country with the necessary support personnel. His delegation was confident that the Committee would provide the Mission with the resources it required to help consolidate peace in Colombia.

12. **Ms. Dominguez** (Chile) said that, as one of the guarantors of the peace negotiations in Colombia, Chile reaffirmed its intention to continue cooperating in the consolidation of peace. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia would be crucial for building a lasting peace, thereby giving hope to all those seeking an end to conflicts in other places. Its mandate would ensure the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life; security measures in former conflict zones; and political participation by FARC-EP members who had laid down their arms under the peace agreement. She noted the commendable efforts of Colombia in supporting the deployment of the Mission, and the contributions of observers and other human resources by

Member States from the region. The Member States must provide the necessary resources to the Mission in a predictable, flexible and efficient manner that would enable it to fulfil its mandate.

13. **Ms. Babio** (Argentina) said that her Government had strongly supported the Colombian people in their commitment to peace, and had been one of the main contributors of observers to the United Nations Mission in Colombia. The new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia exemplified the Organization's ability to proactively assist a country to achieve a lasting peace, and Argentina would continue to provide support to overcome the challenges ahead. She urged the Committee to approve the resources for the Mission that had been proposed by the Secretary-General and recommended by the Advisory Committee.

14. **Mr. Feldman** (Brazil) said that his delegation celebrated the success of the United Nations Mission in Colombia and congratulated Colombia for its commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement, which would have positive effects of historical significance for the entire region. He welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolutions 2366 (2017), 2377 (2017) and 2381 (2017) concerning the establishment and mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Mission should be provided with all necessary resources for the proper implementation of its mandate.

15. **Ms. Mejía Velez** (Colombia) said that her delegation reiterated its thanks to the international community and the States of her region for demonstrating their commitment to peace in Colombia through their support for the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which had successfully implemented its mandate. Her country now sought to take the next crucial step in the peace process, with the assistance of the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Mission's mandate included the political, economic and social reintegration of FARC-EP members and the implementation of personal and collective security guarantees and protection programmes for communities and organizations. The full and effective implementation of that mandate would depend on the human and financial resources requested by the Secretary-General, and she was confident that the Committee would continue to support Colombia and its people as they moved forward towards peace.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.